



VERJEE: One important political leader, Yasser Arafat, stating that nothing tangible was gotten out of Aqaba, for the Palestinians at least. He said they got nothing. He said that unauthorized outposts were -- were meaningless. Just moving one caravan from one place to another meant nothing really.

Mr. Al-Kidwa, if I can ask you, when we hear comments like this, it could be interpreted as Yasser Arafat really trying to undermine the process here, trying to undermine his own prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas. How real is the power struggle between Mr. Abbas and Yasser Arafat?

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AL-KIDWA: Let me first say that I don't think that the -- President Arafat said exactly what you have just quoted. I think he said that Mr. Sharon did not offer a lot of tangible things to the Palestinian people, and there is a difference. I would think that this is true.

We also think that the American position, as articulated by President Bush, offered some kind of serious hope for the future. Now, with regard to the -- what's -- the so-called power struggle, I think there is nothing -- not like that at all. We have an elected president, (UNINTELLIGIBLE) leader, and we have an appointed prime minister that...

VERJEE: OK.

AL-KIDWA: ... got the confidence vote of the (UNINTELLIGIBLE) council. Both men will do their job and -- to the best of their abilities, and we hope that this will continue in an appropriate way on the basis of the Palestinian law and the...

VERJEE: OK.

AL-KIDWA: ... Palestinian desires.

VERJEE: Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Palestinian representative to the United Nations. Daniel Ayalon, the Israeli ambassador to the United States. And George Mitchell, a former U.S. senator and former Middle East negotiator. Thank you all so much for speaking to us on "Q&A." Thank you.

That's this edition of "Q&A."

We're going to have more news in just a moment.

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SHOW: CNBC Special Report with Maria Bartiromo (9:00 PM ET) - CNBC
June 2, 2003 Monday

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HEADLINE: Nasser Al-Kidwa, permanent Palestinian observer to the United Nations, discusses what the Palestinians and Israelis will have to do to achieve peace in the Middle East

ANCHORS: MARIA BARTIROMO

BODY:

Dr. CONDOLEEZZA RICE (National Security Advisor): Prime Minister Sharon and his partners in the Palestinian Authority, we believe now are going to be on a path that will lead to peace. That's why the president is going. The president would not go if he did not believe that there was a new opportunity for peace.

MARIA BARTIROMO, host:

So will Wednesday's three-way summit truly be a new opportunity for peace after years of hatred and 32 straight months of intense violence between the Israelis and Palestinians? We just heard from a senior advisor to Ariel s--Sharon. Joining me now here in the studio is Nasser Al-Kidwa, the permanent Palestinian observer to the United Nations.

Mr. Al-Kidwa, good to have you with us. Thank you.

Mr. NASSER AL-KIDWA (Palestinian Observer To The UN): Thank you.

BARTIROMO: Well, you heard the interview...

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Yes.

BARTIROMO: ...with Dr. Gissin.

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Mm-hmm.

BARTIROMO: He emphasized the need to end the terror. He said, and I quote, "If we do not eradicate terrorism, dismantle the terror groups, it will be difficult to achieve peace." Do you think Abbas comes to this meeting with, in fact, a real cease-fire?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Well, let me first say before that, it is not only about ending terror. It's about ending terror and ending occupation as well. I think the 'road map' has in itself, the--the obligations that have to be carried out by both sides. There is three phases there. And it is true that the movement from one phase to another requires some kind of evaluation by--by the quartet--the

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United States and--and its allies--about the results of--of each phase. But within the phase, both parties have to implement their obligations, in respect of the implementation by the other side. And in this regard, one has to stress the need for the removal of the unauthorized outpost, that is the settlements, and also the complete cessation of settlement activities. You have yet to hear something like that by the Israeli side. So it's both. As I said, it's--it's an attempt to ending violence and terrorism but also ending Israeli attacks, ending Israeli assassinations, Israeli destructions as well as ending settlement activities in the occupied territories.

BARTIROMO: Let--let's focus first on the obligation on the Palestinian side.

Mr. AL-KIDWA: OK.

BARTIROMO: And--and one of those obligations is to dismantle these relationships with militant groups. Israel has argued that a truce with Hamas is insufficient, that a truce will only give the militant group more power, more time to rebuild, in effect. Sharon is demanding that Abbas take--fol--take certain steps. We have the steps on screen. I'd like you to take--take a look at these steps which have been outlined in the 'road map': the arresting of terrorists, confiscating of weapons, dismantling of the militant organizations, taking preventative measures to, in fact, end the indictment to violence. Do you believe Abbas is ready to do this in conjunction with the obligations on the Israeli side having been met?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Ultimately, I think the Palestinian Authority will have to do these things, yes. First, we are talking about--about a cease-fire that's--that's, by the way, include both--both aspects. One, the n--the need to s--to--to stop all military attacks against Israeli civilians. This is a must, because this violate international law. The other part, the cessation of all kind of violence, including violence in the occupied territories. And, frankly, you need the other side as well to stop--to stop military attacks so tha--that you can have this kind of a comprehensive cessation of violence and all kind of attacks by either--either sides. After that, you will create, then, the necessary environment for further actions to be taken. At that time, the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people will start believing in this process again, will lend their support for the Palestinian Authority for the Palestinian government, so on and so forth.

But, again, for this to happen, you'll need to see some real steps being taken by the Israeli side as well, foremost of which a clear indication that settlement activities will have to stop. Settlements are illegal under international law. They constitute war crimes. They represent colonization of the Palestinian land. You can't assume--you can't expect any movement forward without first the Palestinian people are being told that this process is stopped, and now we are heading into the other direction, the direction of reconciliation and the path for the two states.

BARTIROMO: It does appear that each side basically has the same message, that we will fulfill our obligations once we see evidence that they are fulfilling their obligations. As you sit here tonight, would your people be prepared to take the first step?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: I'm not saying we will do our part only when--when Israel does Page 61

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its part. I am saying both of us have to do that at the same time. This is what Mr. Gissin did not say, and this is precisely what the 'road map' is saying, and it--it indicates steps one, two, three, four. Finally, for instance, we got the acceptance of the 'road map' by the Israeli government. At some point the

Israeli government said no, we will not give our acceptance. Luckily, it did happen, and now we need to see the statements because this is another requirement of the 'road map' itself, the statements by the two sides. We hope this will happen in Aqaba. And thirdly, specific steps has to be taken by both sides; the Palestinian side towards ending violence, the Israeli side towards ending military attacks and removing the outpost as well as cessation of all settlement activities. So together, simultaneously at the same time.

BARTIROMO: What is your feeling as far as what you've heard so far from the prime minister of Israel? For example, Mr. Sharon has--has--just last week, he used the word 'occupation' in an interview, which we were just talking about with Dr. Gissin. He said, 'We will be ready to carry out very painful steps. I have decided to make every effort to reach the settlements.' Have you not been encouraged by his comments so far? What are your expectations specifically for the summit?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: One cannot deny that you are hearing things coming from the Israeli side, most importantly from Prime Minister Sharon, that were not uttered before. There's no way to deny that. Things like...

BARTIROMO: So there's been a strategic change?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: That I cannot say. I cannot say that it went that much. I hope so, but you hear now about the need to end occupation. You hear terms such as 'the Palestinian people.' You hear that we want to live together in--in dignity and--and--and--real co-existence. These are good, positive, encouraging results. Now whether they will really materialize and--and get into some concrete new facts on the ground, I hope so. And we definitely need to give it our best and--and--and to proceed together in that--in that road, hopefully, with full help by the US administration.

BARTIROMO: W--we will slip in a quick break, Mr. Al-Kidwa. When we come back, I'd like to discuss the role of Arafat and what you're seeing there. We will be right back with Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Palestinian observer to the United Nations. Do stay with us on SPECIAL REPORT tonight.

(Announcements)

President GEORGE W. BUSH: And--and--and I will put in as much time as necessary to achieve the vision of two states living side by side in peace.

BARTIROMO: Welcome back to SPECIAL REPORT. We are discussing the upcoming Middle Eastern summit, and I am here in the studio speaking to Nasser Al-Kidwa, the permanent Palestinian observer to the United Nations.

Let's talk a little about the relationship between Abbas and Arafat. They are said to speak daily, meet weekly. Is that correct?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Oh, probably more. I think they are--they have very close relationship. They have been together for maybe--What?--30, 40 years, part of

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the Palestinian historic leadership, so...

BARTIROMO: It is widely seen that Arafat is working behind the scenes before the summit, and e--exerts a lot of control. In your view, how much influence does Arafat continue to have over these negotiations?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: A lot. President Arafat is the leader of the Palestinian people--legitimate leader and the elected president. He went along and the--the Palestinian institutions--political institutions went along with--with the establishment of the post of the prime minister and with the nomination of Mr. Abbas, basically, frankly because we want to cooperate with the United States. This was one of--of the--the main--the main conditions, if you wish, for the United States to proceed with--with--with things. So as such, we are hopeful, but let me tell you something. Mr. Abbas will never accept things less than what the Palestinian people might accept.

BARTIROMO: Of course, but...

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Or any other leader at that same time, so I don't think that this is the--the main issue. Mr. Abbas is doing a good job. However, the issue of choosing a leader of the Palestinian people will remain the business of the Palestinian people.

BARTIROMO: But the issue is Arafat possibly undermining Abbas and undermining the peace proposals. Time magazine reports just today, and I quote, "Arafat is working behind the scenes with some success to undermine the new prime minister."

Mr. AL-KIDWA: I think this is utter nonsense. If--if--if Time magazine means that Arafat still control a lot of the decision-making process, probably the magazine is correct, but not to undermine the prime minister; actually to implement the work of the prime minister and hopefully together to proceed toward the--the establishment of real peace. At the end, the Israeli side needs an authentic leader--authentic leader to sign a solid agreement with them, and that is Mr. Arafat. Until then, I think Prime Minister Abu Mazen will do a very good job as he is doing just now.

BARTIROMO: Let me talk to you about the--the draft statement that Palestinian leaders are working on right now. This draft is expected to be released sometime during the summit.

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Yes.

BARTIROMO: Early word is that this, the draft, so far, does not include an important element which has been sought very severely by Israel--a recognition of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. Is that in the draft?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: No, it is not in the draft, and it cannot be, and let me tell you why. First, a few years ago we accepted the--the concept of mutual recognition, that Palestine would recognize Israel and vice versa. And then at that time, we were told, no, you have to accept something which is very strange under international law, the formula of Israel's rights to exist. We accepted that, although it doesn't exist in international law, to indicate that we are sincere about the future relationship between the two sides. Now we are being

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told that we have to accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, meaning to accept dropping the right of return for Palestinian refugees in advance. This is a code word for dropping this right, and it has nothing to do with reconciliation or co-existence between Israel and Palestine.

BARTIROMO: But--but, Mr. Al-Kidwa, the bottom line is, are you and the Israelis ready to split this piece of land? That's the--what...

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Absolutely.

BARTIROMO: ...in the draft, what in the statement will be seen as a concession to the other side?

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Absolutely. The time we say we accept Israel and we accept its rights to exist within its 1967 borders. Israel has never said we accept Palestine on the whole West Bank and Gaza. And Mr. Sharon actually, publicly is speaking about Palestine on half of the West Bank, something that will never be accepted by the Palestinian side, and that is the dilemma. Now we are being asked to drop the right of refugees in advance, while it is something that should be negotiated during the final settlement between the two sides. So there's a lot of tricks there. I hope that viewers look carefully at these things and not just at the face value.

BARTIROMO: Mr. Al-Kidwa, good to have you with us. Thanks so much.

Mr. AL-KIDWA: Thank you very much.

BARTIROMO: We appreciate it. Nasser Al-Kidwa joining us tonight.

Well, coming up in the next half-hour of SPECIAL REPORT, the business of baseball, basketball, and bureaucracies. We'll start with Christie Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey and soon to be former head of the Environmental Protection Agency. After two and a half years at the agency, we will hear about her victories, frustrations and what's next for her after she leaves Washington. This is SPECIAL REPORT. We'll be right back.

(Announcements)

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NEWS FORUM

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BODY:

GABE PRESSMAN, host: